

Because I Love You! (A Message To Relatives)

Right now you may be wondering why you have received this message from me? The answer, simply stated, is, *"Because I love you!"* I love you not merely because of our family relationship, but also because the Bible tells me that you have an eternal soul that I, as a Christian, should be concerned about **(Mat. 28:19,20)**.

It is not always easy to speak to our loved ones in person about spiritual matters, nor is it always a convenient time when we happen to be with them. During family gatherings there are other family members around and activities that have been planned, and to speak about spiritual matters during those times could be quite uncomfortable for us both. I must be honest in saying that it is at those times that I realize how much my family members mean to me, and that always seems to start me thinking about spiritual matters, and especially those areas of religion that we differ on.

I am sure you realize that there are probably several areas of religion on which we might readily agree. I am also quite sure that you understand that we have our differences as well? There are some areas that are distantly related to religion on which we can "agree to disagree" (i.e. - padded or unpadded pews, meeting house carpet color, etc.), but we certainly cannot "agree to disagree" about how we become a child of God, and how we choose to worship God. These are areas that have been pre-decided by God Himself in the pages of the Bible!

The Bible tells us that becoming a child of God, a Christian, is similar in some respects to becoming a child in the physical world. I only know of (2) two ways to become a child in the physical world: 1) Birth and 2) Adoption, though a child is

already a "child" when he or she is adopted, they have simply lost their parents at some point in their life and are in need of new parents. Concerning becoming a child by birth, in the New Testament book of **John**, in **chapter 3**, Jesus spoke to Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jewish sect called the "Pharisees" and said, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* Nicodemus said to Him, *"How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"* Jesus answered, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."*

In the Scripture just quoted, Jesus compares salvation to **physical birth** to help Nicodemus easily understand His message, though Nicodemus misunderstood at first. Jesus does this by noticing **(3) three points: 1) The planting of seed, a begetting, 2) the bringing forth of life, a birth, and 3) a change in relationship, being added to a family**, all of which are the main aspects of **physical birth**. When these same three points are applied to the **spiritual birth** we can see that the Seed, the Word of God **(Luke 8:11)**, which is provided by the Father **(2 Tim. 3:16)**, was delivered to the Apostles by the Holy Spirit **(Eph. 3:5)** - this is the **begetting**. This Seed, the Word of God, tells us to confess our faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God **(Rom. 10:9,10)**, to repent of our past sins **(Luke 13:3)**, and to be baptized for the remission of those past sins **(Mark 16:15,16; Acts 2:38)**, which completes the new **birth** **(Rom. 6:4,5)**. When the obedient believer is brought up out of the waters of baptism they are then added by God to His church **(Acts 2:41)**, which is His **family**.

When we stop to consider how a child of God should worship the Father in Heaven, we can see a close relationship with that of the physical

relationship between a child and his parents. For example, all parents expect obedience from their children, for the parents develop rules for the safety and overall welfare of the children. The Bible echoes this same principle in both the Old Testament **(Deu. 21:18-21)** and the New Testament **(Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:20)**. If God expects children to obey their parents in the physical family relationship, why is it so hard for some to see that He does likewise in His spiritual family? The Bible tells us that He does. In fact, that is how we show our love for God, by keeping His commandments, **(John 14:15,21, & 31, John 15:10; 1 John 5:2,3)**. Sometimes I may have difficulties understanding why God has or has not authorized something, but as an obedient child I must realize that He knows what is best for me as His child, and so I must obey His will in my daily life and as I assemble with my brethren to worship!

In **John chapter 4**, a Samaritan woman said to Jesus, *"Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship."* Jesus said to her, *"Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth,"* **(John 4:20-24)**. To worship God in "spirit" means to do so with our inner person, our spiritual intellect, for one does not worship by accident. Worship must be intentional, but that is not all. God's Word also says to worship in "truth." In His prayer to God, Jesus said, *"Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth,"* **(John 17:17)**. So, to worship in "truth" means to worship according to His Word.

I imagine one of the main areas of difference that you and I would have concerning worship to God would be one of the main differences that churches of Christ have with most denominational churches, and that is the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship. Personally speaking, I love all types of music that use mechanical instruments. But, if I must worship according to "truth," being God's Word (**John 17:17**), I have to admit that the New Testament is silent upon the practice of using the mechanical instrument in worship to God. However, I do read in His Word where we are told to "sing" (**Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16**), but to "play" and to "sing" are two entirely different acts. I must not go beyond God's Word just to satisfy my wants and desires. It is God that I am worshipping, and if He wanted me to "play" while I "sing," He would have told me to in His Word.

I am aware that King David, in the Old Testament, decided to use mechanical instruments of music in worship to God, but even there I cannot find where God "commanded" him to do so. I do believe there is ample evidence to prove that the use of the mechanical instrument was David's idea and not God's, and we do know that certain acts of "ignorance" in those days God "winked" at (**Acts 17:30**). But, as we move on into the later books of the Old Testament and read from Amos, the prophet of God, we see that David's instruments were not well thought of by God by that time, (**Amos 5:23, 6:5**), and by the time of the New Testament writings the mention of instruments in praise to God had disappeared. Could the words of Amos have something to do with this New Testament silence?

Another item of worship that we probably disagree on is the frequency of partaking of the Lord's Supper. Members of the church of Christ partake of the Lord's Supper on every first day of

the week as we find the first century Christians doing according to **Acts 20:7**. Some have said that the Bible "does not say 'every' first day of the week!" While that is true, we understand that God also did not tell His Israelite children to observe "every" Sabbath Day and keep it holy, but I am quite sure the Israelites understood that, since every week has a seventh day, they should observe "every" seventh day of "every" week. This is the same reason I choose to partake of the Lord's Supper "every" first day of the week - because "every" week has a "first" day. I have often wondered why those denominations that do not choose to partake of the Lord's Supper "every" first day of "every" week are still quite serious about taking up an offering "every" first day of "every" week, and yet the Bible does not use the word "every" in (**1 Cor. 16:2**).

There are so many things we could discuss about our religious differences, but this small tract would not be sufficient for such a discussion. Words cannot express how much I would love to speak about these things and more with you in person. You may not be up to that right now, and if so, I understand. We could continue our study by mail or email. I have a Bible Study lesson series that I would love to send to you absolutely **FREE**. I am not contacting you to pressure you into anything. I want you to know that I am here for you when you are ready to talk and discuss these things, but in all this I am doing so especially "*Because I Love You!*"

All Scripture quotations taken from the New King James Version of The Holy Bible unless otherwise noted.

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*A Heartfelt Message
To Relatives*